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Bringing the Men Back In: Catalyzing Gender Equality at Universities Through Advocates & Allies

Kristen Myers* [a] Stephanie George [b] Allison S. Danell [c]
Andrew T. Morehead [c]

[a] Department of Sociology, East Carolina University (United States)
[b] Department of Engineering, East Carolina University (United States)
[c] Department of Chemistry, East Carolina University (United States)

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Abstract

The United States' National Science Foundation (NSF) ADVANCE program awards funding to universities to improve gender equality in the faculty ranks in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Our team at East Carolina University is using our award to educate men in the university about implicit and explicit gender bias and how they can and should use their power to help disrupt these systems. The program, adapted from other universities with past NSF ADVANCE funding, is in its infancy at our university, but there are initial signs of progress. This essay analyzes early data, grounded in sociological theories of gender so as to understand and make progress on structural change in our academic institution. The timeline for action and initial outcomes, including three specific scenarios, are presented. A discussion regarding the impact of the program and how it can be expanded and strengthened is also presented. We reflect on gendered tensions, and explore the limitations of "bringing men in" to correct structural power imbalances that have disproportionately benefitted them.

Keywords: Women in STEM; Gender structure; Allyship; Structural change; Universities.

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* myerskr19@ecu.edu

1 Bringing the Men Back In

In the past twenty years, feminist strategies for diversifying the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) have brought awareness to sex-segregation and gender disparities, and they have moderately increased the ratio of women and under-represented minorities (URM) who earn doctorate degrees in STEM. The United States' National Science Foundation (NSF) shows that the number of women who earned doctorates in STEM fields increased by 15% between 2011 and 2020 (NCSES, 2023). However, despite concerted efforts, backed by considerable resources, adding more women has not fundamentally transformed the fields themselves (Myers et al., 2019; Laursen & Austin, 2020). Why not? The answer is nothing new to feminist sociologists. Decades ago, Acker (1990) taught us to conceptualize organizations through a feminist lens, particularly work organizations. Far from being gender neutral, work organizations are, in fact, complexly structured by gender. Acker interrupted the hegemonic assumption that the "ideal worker" was not a disembodied being. Workers' bodies are gendered in ways that matter both in and out of the workplace. At work, people's gender has been routinely used to segregate them into unequal jobs. These jobs are stratified by wages, autonomy, and mobility (England et al., 1988; Reskin, 1988). This systematic stratification process is called "sex segregation." As England et al. (1988), Reskin (1988) and many others have argued, workers are sorted according to whether they are male or female (by their sex), regardless of how they perform their gender at work.

Sex segregation has been normalized if not naturalized in most organizations (Thébaud & Charles, 2018). Sex segregation reifies a binary construction of gender. Indeed, a binary conceptualization of gender still pervades most institutions, including educational institutions (Myers, 2018). Grounded in feminist analyses, many policy makers have tried to interrupt sex segregation at work. However, their strategies for making change are often flawed. Reskin (1988) showed that the ill effects of sex segregation in the workplace cannot be undone by integrating workplaces by sex (see also Reskin et al., 1999). Simply putting women and men with the same credentials together in the same workplace and assigning them the same tasks does not, in fact, undo gender inequality related to the wage and authority gap. Because most men benefit from gender inequality whether they agree with gender inequality or not, they are invested in protecting gender inequality, both unconsciously and consciously, reaping what Connell (1995) has called "patriarchal dividends" from their investment in gender hierarchies. Reskin argued that society cannot disrupt gender inequality at work without focusing on the men and their actions. She said, "It is time to bring men back into our theories of economic inequality." Following Reskin, without understanding men's (often unwitting) use of gendered power and authority in STEM fields, we cannot hope to transform STEM disciplines in universities into inclusive and equitable workplaces for all.

In our project, THRIVE@ECU, a grant funded by the NSF ADVANCE program, we have taken up Reskin's charge to "bring men back in" to our analysis of persistent gender inequality among faculty in STEM fields in our university. In so doing, we are intentionally *playing on* Reskin's words. Clearly, men have dominated STEM fields since they emerged (Dunlap & Barth, 2023). Unlike other historically male-dominated fields, men have not left STEM fields after women entered (e.g., Puzio & Valshtein, 2022). We are not literally bringing them back in to STEM fields. We *are* bringing them in to workshops. We are putting their actions back into focus. We are not recentering men's needs. Instead, we are putting them on the spot. The goal of THRIVE is to transform STEM fields for the betterment of all faculty. Rather than trying to do that work *in spite of* men who benefit from gendered (and other forms of)

stratification, we intentionally focus on these men as potential change agents. In addition to seeking to remove barriers and to improve support systems for marginalized faculty, we explore ways to harness privileged men's agency, resources, and influence so that the men themselves can help to transform workplaces for the good of the whole faculty, as well as students in the pipeline.

Our project starts with the recognition that gender is a structure that shapes workplaces, creating differential opportunities and constraints for people by gender category (Risman, 2004 & 2018; Risman & Davis, 2013; Risman et al., 2018). Gender is not, of course, a binary. Gender is a spectrum, with people "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) differently across space, place, and time. Analytically, we go beyond the gender binary, acknowledging that gender structure is complexly interconnected with other systems of inequality, including economic inequality and racism, among others (Collins, 2022). Social structures are intersectional (Crenshaw, 2017). In STEM fields, sex-segregation intersects with and compounds racial/ethnic segregation in STEM fields, making the STEM professoriate overwhelmingly white and male (Bruning et al., 2015).

At our university, we seek to make change at several levels of the structure of the institution: to change culture, interactions, and organizational systems. One of our major strategies for making change at multiple levels is to adapt a program called Advocates & Allies. Advocates & Allies was initially designed to interrupt persistent gendered power dynamics among faculty in the academy, bringing men on board as allies, and to harness and deploy their gendered privileges in order to change structure, culture, and practices that marginalize faculty who identify as women in STEM. Although NSF ADVANCE focuses on faculty only, improving universities for faculty has positive ripple effects for graduate and undergraduate students as well. In this essay, we draw on feminist theories of structural change to analyze data from our efforts to date, reflecting on the strengths and weakness of our approach, exploring ways to improve as we move forward. Although this analysis focuses primarily on our case study, it has implications for other transformative work in the academy.

2 The Problem

Sex-segregation and the under-representation of women in most STEM fields continues to be a problem. The NSF tracks data on diversity of STEM education, employment, and income in the U.S. Women working full time in Science and Engineering in 2019 continued to earn less than their male colleagues, earning 74% of what men earned on average (NCSES, 2021). Evidently, sex-segregation has material consequences for women. Researchers argue that differentiation occurs when women are isolated, helping to legitimize stereotypes that women are less capable than men (Davis et al., 2012). Carlone and Johnson (2007) show that scientists who are women of color have the competence and skills to perform as scientists, but they are not recognized *as scientists* by their colleagues. Race and class are intersecting factors that predict which women will go into and stay in STEM fields (Riegle-Crumb & Humphries, 2012), with white, middle-class women most likely to persist (Bruning et al., 2015).

The core ideologies in many STEM fields focus on meritocracy and individualism (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010). This context matters. In an important study, Seron and colleagues (2018) argue that fields like engineering are assumed to be objective, sites where values and politics are irrelevant. Seron et al. collected data using diaries from Engineering students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Olin College of Engineering, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts, over a four-year period. They find that women engineers expe-

rience a paradox of (in)visibility: they are highly visible as women, yet invisible as engineers. (In)visibility creates tension for women engineers who are also trained to believe in a meritocratic, positivist culture. The dynamics that play out in Engineering are not unique to that field. We find them in Science, Technology and Math as well, creating obstacles for recruitment, retention, and advancement of women in STEM in the academy (Bird, 2011; Myers et al., 2019; Laursen & Austin, 2020).

At our institution, East Carolina University (ECU), we have faced similar gendered problems in STEM. ECU is a public research doctoral university in the Southeastern U.S. and the fourth largest public university in the state of North Carolina. In 2023, there were 21,688 undergraduate students, 58% of whom were identified as women. There were 5,493 graduate students, 69% of whom identified as women. ECU has 23 STEM departments, not including various clinical departments. The total number of faculty in 2023 was 2,058, 48% of whom were tenure-track/tenured. Forty-six percent (46%) of the total faculty identified as men. In the year we wrote this article, women faculty were under-represented in STEM, making up 18% of all faculty (across rank) in Engineering, 33% of faculty in the Natural Sciences, 29% of faculty in the Health Sciences, and 36% of the faculty in the Social Sciences. As Table 1 shows, that under-representation in STEM fields was exacerbated by rank (the percentages of assistant, associate and full professors are listed in parentheses in that order): women made up less than half (41%) of Assistant Professors, a third (32.5%) of Associate Professors, and only 15% of Full Professors in STEM disciplines. As Table 1 shows, the problem is the worst in Engineering and Technology departments.

Table 1: Women as Percentage of Faculty Across STEM Areas

Engineering and Technology	17.6% (17.4%, 19.4%, 14.3%)
Natural Sciences	32.5% (54.2%, 38.0%, 15.2%)
Social Sciences	35.5% (43.8%, 50.0%,17.9%)
Health Sciences	29.4% (53.9%, 33.3%, 12.0%)
Total	29.8% (40.8%, 36.2%, 15.3%)
	All Ranks (Assistant, Associate, Full)

In 2021, there were few women in leadership positions. Of the 10 academic deans, only three (30%) were women. In 2022 one of those women left the university for another job, and her position has not yet been refilled. In the STEM departments, only 3 of 23 (13%) department chairs/heads were women. In non-STEM departments, 49% of department chairs/heads were women. These numbers are concerning. Research shows that diversifying leadership

can help to undo gender and racial bias in the workplace (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2009), and because university leaders are key to making change (Gaubatz & Ensminger, 2017), THRIVE@ECU is concerned with addressing sex-segregation among leaders as well as among faculty.

In our project, we are concerned with addressing incidents of bias in interactions as well as structural barriers. To address persistent gender inequality in STEM fields in particular (and all fields in general) at our university, THRIVE@ECU has taken many approaches. THRIVE stands for Towards Hiring, Resources, Inclusion, Values and Excellence. Our project was funded by the NSF ADVANCE program to adapt Advocates & Allies (A&A) to our university context. A&A calls on men who are influential leaders on campus to deploy their spheres of influence, furthering our goals of increasing gender equality in STEM fields. We will describe this program, our implementation of it, and a preliminary analysis of its impact through a gender structure theoretical lens.

3 Analytic Frame

In this project, we draw upon different theoretical frames for understanding the problems that we are addressing and for designing strategies for creating change. We describe those frames here.

3.1 Gender Structure Theory

The first frame that we draw upon is Risman's (2004) gender structure theory. Growing out of Giddens (1984) theory of "structuration", Risman's gender structure theory is useful for understanding how gender structure, culture, and practices interconnect simultaneously to perpetuate gender inequality for women in STEM. In describing her theory, Risman (2018) writes,

> Gender structure theory provides a conceptual framework for understanding the way gender is re-produced through cultural and material processes taking place at individual, interactional, and macro-dimensions. At the same time, gender structure theory emphasizes how processes at one dimension influence those taking place in another (p. 70).

According to Risman, gender differentially constrains and enables people at three main societal levels: the individual, the interactional, and the macro-organizational. Gender structures shape, constrain, and impact individuals' actions. Individuals can and do act in ways that challenge the structure, but, as West and Zimmerman (1987) argue, they often "do gender" in ways that reinforce that structure. A diagram of Risman's model is shown in Figure 1. Here, she illustrates how the gender structure operates across levels.

We apply Risman's theory to our project in this way: Sex-segregation in STEM is a structural problem, with structural barriers to women's recruitment, retention and advancement in STEM fields. The devaluation of women is a cultural product, reflecting larger meanings systems about gender. Unconscious bias plays out in interpersonal interactions, whereby women in STEM are made to feel that they do not belong. THRIVE@ECU seeks to disrupt the gender structure at all three levels, thereby creating sustained structural change.

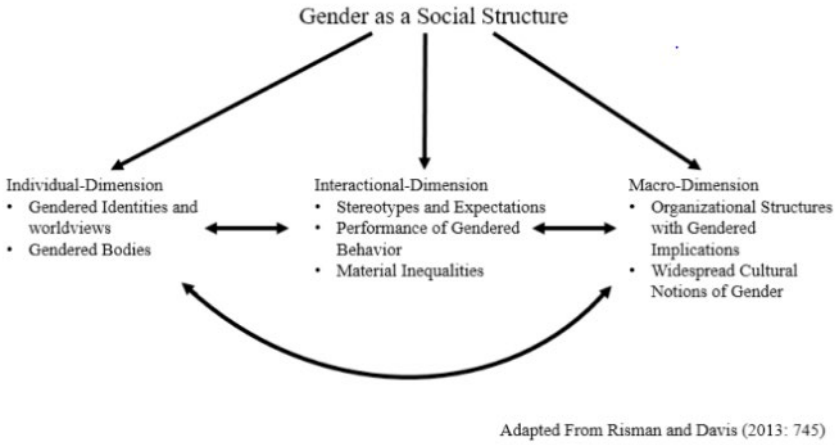

Figure 1: Model of Risman's Gender Structure Theory

3.2 Feminist Theories of Hegemonic and Ideal Masculinity

The second theoretical frame from which we draw insights as we design an intervention for the unequal gender structure at our university is grounded in feminist theories of men and hegemonic masculinity. In her canonical work on masculinities, Connell (1987) asserted that there is no one way to be a man. Instead, there are multiple masculinities — some of which are more socially valued and impactful than others. Connell explained that one form of masculinity takes supremacy above the rest: hegemonic masculinity — the standard or ideal form of masculinity by which all men are measured and policed. Hegemonically masculine men may exert authority, dominance, and control over women and other men within various spheres of their lives, including the workplace. While men may perform masculinity in various ways, society is structured by gender so as to benefit men as a group. Connell (1995) argues that all men earn "patriarchal dividends" from gender inequality. Hegemonic men may reap greater rewards than other men in terms of respect, income, feelings of safety, and influence. However, because of "the gendered order," all men accrue *some* patriarchal dividends regardless of how they enact masculinity or whether they are deemed "successful" in their masculinity. These dividends are accrued interactionally, culturally, and structurally.

In honing the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have explained that the "geography of masculinity" occurs at three levels: 1) Local level of face-to-face interaction; 2) Regional level of culture or nation state; and 3) Global or transnational level. Because we are interested in cultures and practices of masculinity in the workplace, the local level is most relevant to this project. Within the university in general and within STEM departments in particular, hegemonic masculinity may be leveraged for professional and interpersonal gain.

Connell's work has helped to fuel an entire body of feminist theory of men and masculinities. Building on her work, Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) focus on the ways that hegemonic masculinity is produced in every interactions through what they call "manhood acts:"

> To be credited as a man, what an individual male must do [...] is put on a convincing manhood act. This requires mastering a set of conventional signifying practices through which the identity "man" is established and upheld in interaction (p. 279).

In the workplace, manhood acts may take the form of "mansplaining" (DeGennaro & Piscopo, 2023), the devaluation of women's contributions (Davis, et al., 2012), as well acting in ways that serve to block women's advancement (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2009), such as sexual harassment. Manhood acts are so pervasive and commonplace that they are taken for granted in many workplaces. In other words, they are hegemonic. But what if these hegemonic acts were laid bare? What if they were called into question by men themselves? What if manhood were done in a way that does not reproduce gender inequality but instead problematizes it?

In our project, we apply insights from feminist theories of men and masculinity. We adapted Advocates & Allies as a strategy for bringing men in, leveraging their privileges, and redeploying patriarchal dividends, with the goal of reframing the unearned and unexamined privileges of manhood in a strategic way: as resources for interrupting bias and centering women so as to change culture and structure through practices.

4 Advocates & Allies as an Intervention

Figure 2: Operationalizing Gender Structure Theory at ECU

Building upon this theoretical scaffolding, we approach gender inequality in STEM fields on our campus as a systemic problem in which social structures, culture, and everyday interactions simultaneously operate so as to perpetuate and legitimate gender hierarchies. To make change, we must understand these dialectical forces and interrupt them at every level. In our project, we aim to make change at all levels, as depicted in Figure 2. At the cultural level, we aim to change campus culture to make it more inclusive. At the interactional level, we are creating support systems for women in STEM so that their interactions are valuable and help them feel like they belong. At the structural level, we work to remove barriers to advancement and career success. Central to our change model is a focus on men — raising men's awareness about gender inequality, creating empathy for their women colleagues, and asking them to act in ways that positively change structure, culture, and interactions.

4.1 History of Advocates and Allies

The institutional meritocracy was established by white men, built on criteria biased to value contributions by white men, and perpetuated by white men knowingly and unknowingly. Having meritorious advocates and allies within the system changes the foundation of the way

faculty are perceived. These advocates for change undermine the hegemonic narrative that centers men so as to render women visible (Perez, 2019).

The Advocates and Allies (A&A) program was created by North Dakota State University (NDSU) as part of a 2008 National Science Foundation (NSF) ADVANCE Institutional Transformation award (HRD-0811239). Because NSF ADVANCE focuses on institutional changes that benefit women faculty in STEM, A&A has been designed for faculty who identify as men. Based on success of the program (Anicha et al., 2015; Anicha et al., 2017), A&A has since been implemented at over 20 universities (Anicha et al., 2015; Cabrera et al., 2017; Spanierman & Smith, 2017). In 2015, the United States' National Science Foundation awarded North Dakota State University and The Ohio State University, Rochester Institute of Technology, the University of North Texas, and the University of Wyoming an NSF ADVANCE PLAN-D grant (HRD-1500604) to study the effectiveness of Advocates and Allies programs.[1]

More recently, NDSU led Advocates, led Ally Workshops and/or conducted Advocate facilitation at other institutions and organizations, including the Adams State University, the American Society for Engineering Education, Arizona State University, Auburn University, Bucknell University, Clarkson University, Clemson University (HRD-1629934), the Colorado School of Mines, Indiana University, the University of California Santa-Barbara, the University of Cincinnati, the University of Dayton, the University of Minnesota Duluth, the University of Missouri-Columbia, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Portland, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the US Institute of Theatre Technology, and the Women in Engineering Proactive Network (WEPAN). In 2019, the NSF awarded NDSU, Iowa State University, Michigan Technological University, and Western Michigan University, an Advance partnership grant (HRD-1935960), which includes a component to further establish and develop Advocates and Allies programs for faculty who identify as men.

A&A is an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 2017; Collins, 2022) to disrupting entrenched hierarchies by recruiting, training, and deploying members of historically privileged groups on campus to interrupt and correct interpersonal and procedural biases "on the ground." This model recognizes that gender-equity is a concern across all social institutions and that advocates and allies across faculty and administrators are key to disrupting bias and deconstructing systemic gender inequities. In particular, A&A creates teams of white men faculty and administrators to become change agents on behalf of women faculty in STEM, including the most marginalized faculty. This program is important in several ways. First, it helps to correct entrenched power imbalances that reproduce white men's privilege in the academy (Rosser, 2004; Bystydzienski & Bird, 2006; Bird, 2011). Second, it takes the onus from marginalized faculty, who report feeling socially isolated and exhausted from fighting bias fatigue at work and in their communities (Arnold et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2017). Third, it recognizes that lasting change requires ongoing interventions for including diversity (Kalev et al., 2006).

Advocates & Allies are faculty who identify as men and who are committed to action in support of gender equity. Through Ally training, men are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to effect positive change. Although men are the drivers of the A&A program, the program founders thought it was critical to maintain accountability to women. Allies are trained men who promote gender equity through an emphasis on personal and local action. Advocates are allies with an established record in support of gender equity who dedicate signif-

1. See: https://www.ndsu.edu/forward/projects/advocate_forward/advocates_and_allies_project/

icant time and effort to the Advocates & Allies program. Like Allies, Advocates are committed to personal and local action, but they also lead Ally workshops, organize Advocates & Allies activities, and work with women colleagues to set Advocates & Allies priorities and strategies. For more, visit their website.

In adapting A&A here at ECU, our goal was to leverage power and privilege and create a "we" rather than "us/them." Ultimately, the advocates will act as everyday agents of change, helping to shift culture, create accountability, and enforce university-level policies that formally prohibit biases.

4.2 Implementation at ECU

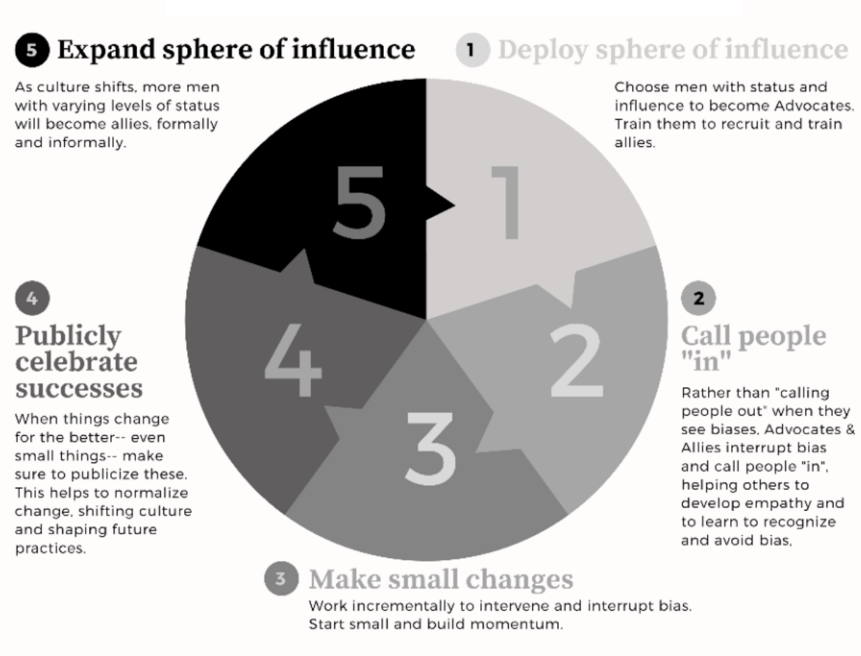

Figure 3: Logic Model for Implementing A&A

As we designed our intervention for gender inequality in STEM fields at ECU, we invested in Advocates & Allies as a promising model for making lasting change on our campus. Ideally, sustained transformation occurs through a cycle of positive, inclusive use of power, privilege, and authority in order — ironically — to disrupt the hegemony of that power, privilege, and authority. In Figure 3, we illustrate the logic of harnessing and deploying the power and influence of men at our university to make changes to the gender structure by leading shifts in culture, interactions and even organizational rules and processes.

This model depicts a marathon, not a race. It is a slow, iterative process that requires the deployment of status to create interest in the subject matter, increase the legitimacy of concerns, and to draw people in as allies.

As shown in the timeline in Figure 4, we were awarded the grant from NSF ADVANCE during the height of the global COVID-19 pandemic. That timing slowed our launch of programming. However, as soon as possible, we began to implement A&A on campus. A call for Advocates was advertised, and men across campus applied. The THRIVE team selected Advocates based on their leadership and influence on campus. Once they were selected, they were

trained in person by the North Dakota State University team in a data-informed way to recognize, understand, and intervene in the unequal gender structure on campus, particularly as it relates to women and under-represented minorities in STEM. The Advocates were told that their role is not to "fix the women," but instead to interrupt the gender structure, calling in more allies to expand their sphere of influence and to act as change agents. Advocates designed programming to raise awareness and recruit allies. Large public events, such as a screening of the film, *Picture a Scientist* (Shattuck & Cheney, 2020), have been effective ways of drawing attention to gender inequality in STEM. This film creates empathy and offers some avenues for change. The Advocates invited a panel of women in STEM to provide further real-world connections to the incidents depicted in the documentary.

Ally workshops are the main route to recruit and train more men. These are short workshops (up to two hours) designed to introduce men to gender bias and to begin the conversation about how to make change. They are not meant to be stand-alone experiences that "fix the men." Coupled with increased awareness about gender inequality fostered by high profile THRIVE-sponsored events, Ally training is meant to catalyze growth in critical consciousness, which will hopefully — if THRIVE is working effectively — be fueled through iterative exposure and positive reinforcement. Advocates lead the workshops, trading on their cultural capital so as to increase the legitimacy of training materials for participants.

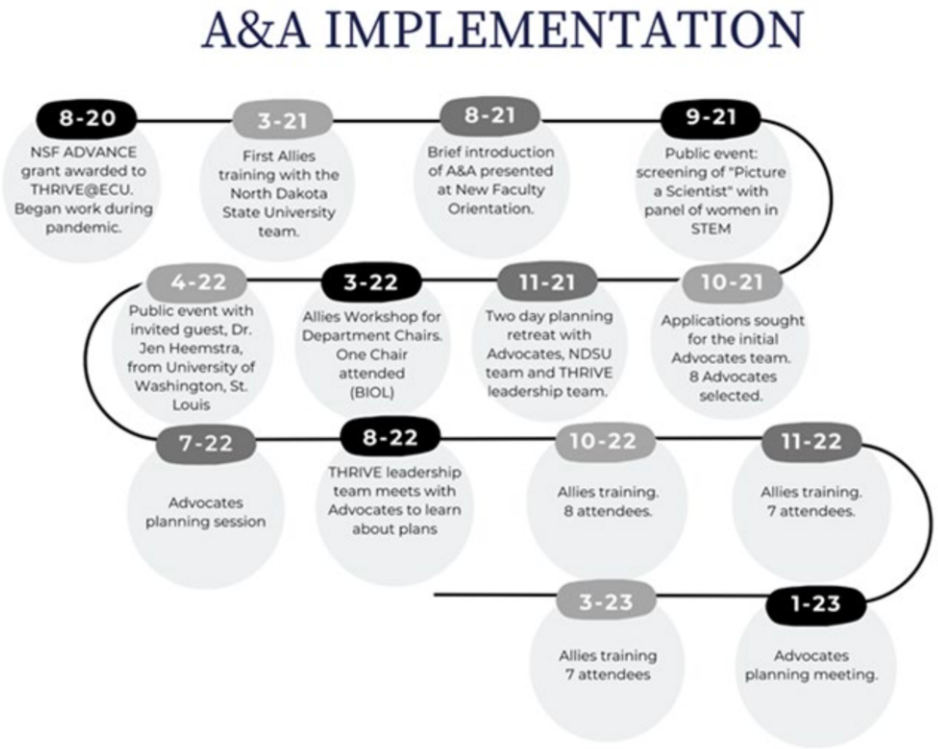

Figure 4: Timeline

Ally trainings are announced across the university, and they are advertised as being open to all men. Despite the focus on men, two training sessions had a woman who attended. At Ally training, Advocates present participants with data from empirical studies about the problem of gender inequality in STEM, showing how that hinders women's careers. Training sessions begin by calling men in, explaining that men are important to change for several reasons: 1)

Women are tired of educating men on gender-equity issues; 2) Women are tired of having prime responsibility to fix gender-equity issues; 3) Women like the idea of men working with other men (but they also want accountability and transparency). 4) Involving men, a group that is not traditionally or fully involved in gender equity, expands the capacity for organizational change. While the "women are tired" language may distance men from women's challenges, it does help to put positive pressure on male participants to step up and do their part.

Ally training sessions define key concepts in the gender inequality literature, include gender equality, gender equity, the chilly climate, and micro aggressions. They bring in real world scenarios where women are treated in biased ways by people who could conceivably be the participants' faculty colleagues. For example, in one scenario, participants are asked to think about a faculty member who commonly states that certain colleagues receive grants because of their gender or race. The participants are asked to think about factors that are relevant to understanding and assessing whether this scenario matters and for whom. Advocates ask: *Do the gender, race, and rank of the faculty member matter? How? In what ways? Where were these statements made? In an official faculty meeting or over lunch? Does that matter? Why?*. These conversations require the participants to think beyond the surface about power dynamics and allyship. In order to activate these participants, it is important for them to know that these are local problems, affecting people they work with and care about, not just abstract concerns. The sessions shine a light on common struggles, and they also offer tools for making change. For example, rather than interrupting a woman colleague in a meeting, allies are guided to focus their attention on what she is saying. Talk less. Listen more. Allies learn how to hold other men accountable for micro aggressions.

The content in ally training sessions is intersectional, pointing out that neither men nor women are monolithic categories. This claim is grounded in empirical evidence. Rhetorically, it is also a useful point to make when asking men to step back and assess their own privilege critically. In other words, knowing that not all men are alike helps Allies to recognize that they themselves have agency. They can push back against the gender structure, even if their male colleagues are complicit. This knowledge may empower them to "do manhood" in counter-hegemonic ways.

5 Reflecting on Early Results

Although the A&A program is still in the development phase, we have collected data on its implementation. Specifically, data were collected during and after each workshop. During the ally training workshops, participants were asked to consider different scenarios where biases were occurring. Each person recorded their thoughts on each scenario, which were collected by trainers. Participants also discussed their individual responses together as a group. These discussions were recorded by trainers. After each workshop, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire about what they learned, what concepts and data they found most helpful, and how they will interrupt local biases in the future. These questionnaires were confidential, disconnected from identifying information. All data were analyzed independently by two co-authors using qualitative content analysis techniques — open, axial, and selective coding (Charmaz, 2014). While our sample size is small, we reflect on these data here, contextualizing them within larger conversations and observations among the THRIVE team. Thinking back to the Logic Model illustrated in Figure 3, we explore evidence of any changes, however incremental, in the gender structure. We find three ways that A&A has catalyzed some change on campus.

5.1 Thinking Critically: Shifts in Culture

We find that A&A is helping Allies to think critically about gender inequality on campus as it plays out in interpersonal relationships, organizational practices, and cultural norms. Participants in Ally training are able to recognize and problematize gender disparities. They indicate that they want to be part of the change. Developing a critical consciousness is an important step in counter-hegemonic action.

For example, at a recent Ally training workshop, participants were read several scenarios, which they then discussed. At the end of the session, Advocates asked participants this:

> Give us one example of how this workshop increased your awareness of the issues around climate, evaluation, and advancement of URM [under-represented minority] faculty on campus? Is there any issue that you think is urgent for us to address? Why?

According to participants, the Ally workshop increased their awareness of the following: salary disparities between men and women, implicit bias regarding gender and race, and barriers to advancement for women and underrepresented minorities. As one new Ally wrote,

> I was unaware that women/URM are viewed as less competent for hiring other women or URM. I had knowledge of implicit bias occurring in women towards women previously, but understanding that they face personal repercussions as well is powerful.

The new Allies showed appreciation for the data, and the data were surprising to them. They were able to put their fledgling counter-hegemonic lenses about gender and race into words as soon as the workshop ended. They thought that it was urgent to address starting salary differences between women and men faculty as well as between white faculty and URM faculty. They also thought that it was important to prioritize promoting women and underrepresented minority faculty from Associate professor to Full professor.

Participants in the Ally workshop were also asked this:

> Which scenario resonated with you the most? Why? Considering the scenarios discussed or similar situations, which do you believe you have to help address these types of situations? Are there any of these tools you are particularly likely to utilize?

In responding, participants showed that they were thinking about power dynamics revealed in the discussions about the scenarios. For example, one participant wrote,

> The scenarios were all helpful, but I especially appreciated the one about the female colleague who was mistaken for a student (or who was the recipient of that comment) because it's always hard to decide what to do in such a moment — both to be an ally and yet not a "white knight" that puts her in an even worse situation with/in front of the colleague.

Participants internalized responsibility to act when they see a real-life scenario play out in the future. They pledged to stand up and interrupt bullying and bias, highlight the work and accomplishments of their women and URM colleagues, and to share data with others in positions of authority so as to help spread the word about bias and the harms it causes. In other

words, they committed to act in counter-hegemonic ways, expanding the sphere of influence, a key component in the logic model for change through A&A. These participants showed empathy and agency. Those are good signs that Ally training is impactful on a small scale, at least in the moment. Allies express empathy. They leave training sessions feeling like they know where to focus their energy for making change, rather than being overwhelmed by a problem that is too big and too entrenched to tackle. Critical thinking like this may help shift culture.

5.2 Speaking up: Shifting Practices

There are some indications that participating in Ally training, whether as an Advocate or an Ally, has given some men in leadership roles on campus a lens through which to see gender inequality and a language with which to discuss it. For example, in Spring 2023, the College of Arts and Sciences conducted several searches for new department chairs. In two of the searches, applicants for the chairship had completed Ally training. As part of each search process, candidates were required to give a public talk about their leadership style and preparedness to fill the position. Each of these Allies talked openly about what they learned in THRIVE's Ally training about interpersonal bias as well as gendered and racialized structural processes that advantage whites and men and disadvantage women and URM. They called attention to this work to large audiences, thereby expanding the sphere of influence. In their presentations, these allies promised to address biases in culture, processes, and interactions among colleagues so as to increase equity, transparency, and inclusion. They promised their faculty colleagues and the Dean that, if hired as chairs, they would use their knowledge and authority to make change.

In another case, we look at the impact of ally training on a department chair's discretion and allocation of valuable resources. "Jim"[2] was a Chair of a STEM department who had recently completed ally training. Jim was negotiating with two candidates for two different faculty positions in his department. He was authorized to hire both of them as new faculty. One of these people was a woman, "Claire," and the other was a man, "Theo." At ECU, when new faculty are hired, they are provided with a "startup package," which includes equipment, funds for data collection and analysis, research-related travel, and other key resources that are necessary to fuel a new faculty member as they launch their career. Along with negotiating salary, the Chair also negotiates startup packages. Different faculty need different things. Further, different faculty *ask* for different things. Gendered and racialized patterns in self-advocacy (Stuhlmacher & Linnabery, 2013; Motru & Lent, 2023) have shown to advantage white men. In this case, Claire's search process was completed first, and so Jim negotiated with her first. She created a detailed budget and wrote a compelling justification for her research needs. After several rounds of discussion, Jim settled on a figure for Claire's startup, and he submitted that request. Next, Jim began negotiations with Theo. In terms of dollar value, Theo requested nearly a third more than Claire. In the interest of gender equity, Jim negotiated with Theo, asking him to reflect on whether the resources he requested were crucial or whether they could be acquired through grants or other sources. Theo agreed that he did not actually need all that he requested. Jim was able to submit a budget request for Theo that met his needs while not systemically disadvantaging Claire. Jim explained that he only thought about the inequity because of his Ally training. Both budgets would likely have been approved without revisions. But Jim recognized that Claire would have fewer resources, and that she would feel devalued when she learned of the disparity between her and her new colleague, Theo (these budgets are not confidential). Jim used his knowledge, empathy, and positional privilege to undermine the

2. These are pseudonyms.

gender structure. These data points are useful. We see signs that campus leaders with decision-making power and influence, when outfitted with a critical gender equity lens and a charge to make change, helps to shift practices.

5.3 Pushing Back: Shifting Structure

The third sign that A&A may be making change is that some Advocate and Allies are not only acting in small ways to make change, but they are also pushing back and inciting major structural changes. In one notable case, Advocates leveraged their power and influence to construct a compelling argument for removal of a departmental leader from their post. This is very unusual, even in cases where abuses are flagrant. We argue that this case was successful because of THRIVE's network of positional leaders, including Advocates.

This case began after the THRIVE@ECU team had hosted several large public events and people across campus had begun to talk about gender inequality in new ways. Long-term patterns of bad behavior and gender bias — many of which had been reported previously, to no avail — were revisited and reexamined through a new lens. THRIVE essentially was telling the campus community, "We care about you, and we are here to ensure you are treated equitably." When the Advocates program began, women faculty and graduate students who had been surviving abusive male colleagues, research mentors, and department chairs began to tell THRIVE team members and Advocates about their experiences. It is important to note here that THRIVE's Principal Investigator (PI) is herself a woman in STEM and the Dean of the largest college at ECU. When she began to hear about patterns of abuse, she connected with Advocates and Deans of other college, taking action to appropriately report and put into context the particularly abusive behavior of one employee with positional authority. He was not in the PI's college, but she leveraged her influence to call meetings to seek counsel. Through this leadership network, resources and policies were identified, and actions were taken by faculty in the affected unit to navigate and report the issues. While we hesitate to offer additional details herein (as personnel related concerns can be sensitive in nature), there is ample evidence to support the idea that THRIVE@ECU impacted faculty's awareness of the responsibilities of leaders on campus and how to report unethical behavior and poor performance. This culminated in the replacement of this particular leader with someone who also is part of the A&A group.

We take this is a major success, further weakening the gender structure at ECU. Holding bad actors accountable is important for interrupting other problematic behavior by other problematic leaders. It also serves to delegitimize cultural beliefs and everyday practices of bias, helping to change all faculty, not only campus leaders. When obstacles are removed for faculty, the structure begins to shift.

6 Critical Reflection and Conclusion

THRIVE@ECU adapted the Advocates & Allies program as a means to change the gender structure in the university, to benefit women in STEM in particular and ultimately to benefit all members of the campus community. By bringing the men in, we are working to leverage their positional power in terms of gender, race, rank, and spheres of influence. The Advocates are not meant to change the women, but to help to change the system. We do see signs that this program is working.

However, we are not there yet. Too few men attend Ally workshops. Although the conversations are good, there are not enough people having these conversations to make major structural change. As A&A members themselves advance into leadership roles, they are modeling and voicing the importance of engagement in such activities for their own faculty. We regularly ask ourselves: *Why are there not more participants? How can we expand the sphere of influence? What innovations can we adopt? Is this a problem of apathy? Of men thinking they already know the material and therefore don't need training? Of time commitment?* We cannot decrease the time allocated to training any more — two hours is already much too brief. To answer these questions, it would be instructive to survey the men who opt out of ally training. We have not yet done this. With their feedback, we may be able to make impactful changes to structure and to recruitment techniques. Some Advocates have successfully exerted their status and authority to encourage men to attend training and other A&A events, but the number of participants is still small. We need to explore better ways to make the program more attractive, perhaps by showing the men how their work lives improve. If men are made to understand that gender bias harms men as well as women, perhaps they will become allies.

Another limitation stems from the fact that the program relies on interested individuals who volunteer to attend. The voluntary nature of program means that the work of being an Ally — even for those who have undergone training — may be deprioritized when other work demands increase. If being a change agent is optional and/or recreational, these men will not be able to make change. THRIVE needs to discover how to maintain the urgency of agency for Allies after they leave training and go back to their ongoing work lives. We continue to work with other NSF ADVANCE teams at other U.S. universities as well as with scholars working in MindtheGEPs programs in European institutions to strategize and learn from each other.

The content of the Ally training is always being edited. We realized immediately that it is unrealistic to expect people of different fields to understand gender theory. It is certainly not possible to teach gender theory in two hours, even when it is taught by experts who have dedicated their careers to researching and writing about gender inequality. We have come to terms with the fact that all we can hope to offer is the tip of the iceberg, with a map to how each Ally can dig deeper and expand their knowledge on their own. The real world examples shared by white male leaders help to make gender scholarship more accessible and may help destigmatize the material from the backlash of feminism. As such, we continue to adjust the material and approaches to make the short time the Advocates have with Allies as valuable as possible.

Finally, the voluntary nature of the Ally program also means that A&A takes an individualist approach to addressing a structural problem. Although we can see shifts at the individual level, Risman (2004) reminds us that we cannot change a structure through individual transformation alone. Newly energized and critically thinking Allies leave training and go back to their home departments where nothing has changed. These Allies may become atomized and isolated, and eventually demoralized. They must be able to connect with others who see the world through their new lens, and they must have support in calling for change. THRIVE will continue to expand the support network at all levels of the university to facilitate structural transformation.

When will we know that we have met our goals? When will we reach a state where we no longer have to bring men in to change the gender structure? In deploying men as Allies and Advocates for women, are we reifying the gender binary and undermining our ultimate goal of undoing the gender structure? These are all questions that we continue to ask ourselves as we move forward to change the gender structure of our university. We measure change and adjust

our goals. There is no perfect solution or path. What keeps us grappling with these complicated and sometimes contradictory tensions is a vision for the future of our university where we will have created a feminist inclusive and empowering culture, practices, and organizational structure that is no longer biased by gender, race and other systems of inequality. That is fuel enough to keep us working together on this major project of transformation.

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Kristen Myers – Department of Sociology, East Carolina University (United States)
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3516-2929 | myerskr19@ecu.edu
https://thrive.ecu.edu/
Kristen Myers is a Professor of Sociology and, since 2019, Chair of the Department of Sociology at East Carolina University. She earned her PhD from North Carolina State University in 1996. She also served as Director of the Center for the Study of Women, Gender & Sexuality at Northern Illinois University, where she was sociology faculty from 1996–2019. Myers is an award-winning instructor. She leads interdisciplinary research teams. She is primarily a qualitative methodologist, studying intersectional inequalities in various social contexts including research on the ways that people reproduce racism in their everyday conversations; hyperheterosexuality among primary school children; factors that funnel students into the Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM) pipeline; and expressions of masculinity among unemployed men. She is co-PI on a National Science Foundation ADVANCE grant at ECU (THRIVE@ECU), which is designed to increase equity for women faculty in STEM. Most recently, she is studying sexual consent practices among college students. She has a forthcoming book with Lexington Press.

Stephanie George – Department of Engineering, East Carolina University (United States)
https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7368-8915
https://cet.ecu.edu/engineering/faculty-and-staff/stephanie-george/
Stephanie George is an Associate Professor of Engineering at East Carolina University (ECU). In 2008, she received her Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering from Georgia Tech and Emory University. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Georgia Tech prior to joining ECU in 2010. Dr. George's research applies engineering frameworks to address cardiovascular problems with particular emphasis on computational modeling and image processing. She served as PI for three NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) Site awards and Co-PI for an NSF ADVANCE Adaptation award, and has been recognized for her achievements in integrating research, education and equity. She received ECU's 2017 Scholar-Teacher Award and was selected to participate in the Diversity and Equity Leadership Program (ECU), BRIDGES Academic Leadership for Women (UNC System), and the BB&T Active Learning and Leadership Fellowship program (ECU).

Allison S. Danell – Department of Chemistry, East Carolina University (United States)
https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0242-7558
https://chemistry.ecu.edu/faculty-staff/danella/
Allison S. Danell is a Professor of Chemistry and, since 2020, is also Dean of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences at East Carolina University (ECU). She received her Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2001. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Rowland Institute at Harvard University in 2004, before joining ECU's faculty that same year. Danell is an analytical chemist with expertise in gas phase ion chemistry and dissociation energetics, focused on using mass spectrometry to identify and characterize biomolecules (peptides, oligonucleotides, and fatty acids) and their complexes. She is an award-winning professor and advisor focused on student success through consistent classroom engagement, encouraging inquiry and curiosity, and facilitating research, internship, and other professional development activities. As Dean of the largest college on ECU's campus, Danell is excited to support and promote the education, research, creativity, and workforce development opportunities afforded by the arts and sciences. She boldly acts to create partnerships with internal and external constituents to develop culturally aware communicators and skilled leaders to foster intellectual and economic success of the college, university, and region. Danell serves as a Principal Investigator for the NSF Advance THRIVE grant supporting this work.

Andrew T. Morehead – Department of Chemistry, East Carolina University (United States)
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7812-4773
https://chemistry.ecu.edu/faculty-staff/moreheada/
Andrew T. Morehead Jr. is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Chemistry at East Carolina University (ECU). He received his PhD in Chemistry from Duke University in 1996, and, following a two-year National Institutes of Health Postdoctoral Fellowship at the California Institute of Technology, began his academic career at the University of Maryland-College Park. He moved to ECU in 2003, and has been Chair since 2015. His research interests revolve around asymmetric catalysis, particularly C-H activation, as applied to the synthesis of pharmacologically relevant building blocks. An award winning teacher and a former Chair of the Faculty at ECU, he is passionate about leadership development and mentoring. During his time as Chair, the department's external research expenditures have increased over an order of magnitude and he has successfully guided three Assistant Professors and seven Associate Professors through the tenure/promotion process. He has served as Lead Advocate for the "Allies and Advocates" group at ECU since its inception.